

**ECONOMIC ADMINISTRATION
REFORMS COMMISSION**

REPORT

ACCOUNTABILITY

**DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS
& PUBLIC GRIEVANCES**

ECONOMIC ADMINISTRATION REFORMS COMMISSION

ACCOUNTABILITY

EARC Report No. 29|Phase I

I

Introductory

1.1 Some time ago, in a minute addressed to the Chairman of the Commission the Prime Minister asked whether the Commission had looked into the question of accountability of officials in offices as well as in-charge of projects. In response, the Chairman sent a brief note on the subject to the Prime Minister, referring to some of the basic issues, and indicated that the Commission would be making recommendations separately on the subject of 'Accountability'. This report is being submitted accordingly.

1.2 Within the limited time available it has been necessary for us to confine ourselves in this report mainly to some important aspects of the functioning of the Departments and Ministries of the Central Government. While it covers project implementation in so far as it concerns the role of the Departments and Ministries, particularly in the stage prior to the coming into being of a separate corporate entity to deal with the project, it does not go into the complex questions which arise in the relationship between the Government and the corporate management of public sector enterprises. The latter issue

will need a more comprehensive treatment in which the question of accountability would have to be viewed in the context of the authority which is or should be delegated to the management. This will be dealt with in a separate report which the Commission hopes to submit in the course of the next few months.

II

Approach : Two senses of accountability

2.1 At the outset, before we proceed to a discussion of issues relating to accountability, we have to be clear about the sense in which we use the term. The term can be understood in two different ways, and confusion is likely to result if the distinction is not clearly kept in mind. First, there is accountability in terms of the laws, rules, procedures and conventions. In this sense, the term refers to the need to conform to a set of norms and methods. The issues that arise in this context are those of the propriety of the actions of the official in discharging his tasks. The emphasis is on methods and procedures. In this view, the questions of accountability essentially bear upon the question of the limits of authority.

2.2 In another sense accountability is related more to substance than to form, to achievements than to procedures. Even so, in regard to the traditional tasks of Government the term in this sense implies only responsibility for the prompt disposal of business. But in the context of the non-traditional, developmental functions of Government, 'accountability' in this wider sense goes beyond mere compliance with rules or even speed in disposal. It means responsibility for decisions and answerability for the achievement of the assigned task. In this sense, the examination of the concept of accountability must necessarily encompass the whole range of issues such as specification of tasks, delineation of responsibility, delegation of powers, modes of decision-making, target-setting, performance and its appraisal and finally, reward and punishment. This represents a more positive and purposeful view of the concept of accountability.

III

Emphasis in the past on the questions of propriety and the limits of authority

3.1 Broadly speaking, the emphasis in the past has been on the accountability of the officials in a somewhat narrow and negative sense. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, the traditional and regulatory functions of Government do not easily lend themselves to quantitative targets. In many such activities, quantitative targets may even be misleading. Moreover, in many of the regulatory activities, questions of propriety, observance of norms and due process of law are far more important.

3.2 Secondly, while dealing with the question of accountability, Parliamentary Committees such as the Public Accounts Committee and parliamentary procedures such as Questions, Motions, and Debates have tended to emphasise the limits of executive authority. Audit Reports have tended to concentrate on the observance of form and procedures. Enquiry Committees and Commissions, occasioned almost always by the perceived lapses or excesses of the executive, have further reinforced this approach. The result has been that in the public mind as well as in the mind of the public servants, the negative, formal concept of accountability has assumed far greater importance, relegating to the background and often completely ignoring the positive meaning of accountability.

3.3 Thirdly, the complexity of the functions of the modern Government and the nature of its developmental tasks have also indirectly contributed to this phenomenon. These tasks are essentially multi-dimensional. The involvement of a large number of agencies in the process of examination as well as decision-making is virtually unavoidable. The need for such involvement is further reinforced because of the principle of collective responsibility enshrined in the parliamentary system of Government. The result is that in a large number of important cases, decision-making is by inter-departmental or inter-ministerial committees. This procedure, no doubt, makes for greater coordination and leads to improvement in the quality of decision-making. At the same time, it also results in a measure of blurring of the organisational as well as individual accountability. In such a situation, it is much easier to device ways and means to

determine accountability in terms of procedural norms or speed in disposal; it is much more difficult to analyse a complex task and specify concretely the organisational and individual responsibility. Similarly, it is much simpler (and safer for all the officials concerned) to collectivise all decision-making; it is much more difficult (and hazardous from the point of view of the officials concerned) to shift the collective aspects of decision-making from organisational and individual responsibility.

A more positive approach

4.1 To move away from the negative and formal approach of the past to the question of accountability and to adopt a more positive approach would require both systemic and attitudinal changes. Without such changes, it would be unrealistic to expect greater achievement-orientation or answerability in individual functionaries; nor would it be possible to attempt precise identification of individual responsibility.

Accountability in the context of traditional and non-traditional functions of Government

4.2 While emphasising the need for such a change, we are not suggesting the jettisoning or dilution of the requirement of conformity to procedural norms. Nor do we minimise the importance of conventional accountability in terms of the efficient disposal of business and speed in decision-making. In regard to the more traditional functions of Government, appropriate performance yardsticks should continue to be laid down in terms of disposal of business within a prescribed time-frame. Much of the public discontent against the bureaucracy and the government is attributable to delays in or even absence of response to communications from citizens. Secretaries and even Ministers, in our opinion, should attach importance to these aspects which are, more often than not, treated as only routine matters, not important enough to claim attention at the highest level. We believe that *a high-level watch on the disposal of business in the sphere of the traditional activities of Government will ensure speed in decision-making and make for the greater accountability of officials.*

4.3 The achievement-orientation implicit in the positive meaning of accountability is more relevant to the non-traditional and developmental functions of Government. By and large, the business of the economic ministries provides a good example of such functions. However, such functions are not necessarily confined to the economic ministries only. There are areas of work in the so-called non-economic ministries which are of a developmental character. The special programmes for the welfare of the scheduled castes and tribes handled

in the Ministry of Home Affairs is a patent example. More generally, therefore, it can be said that the achievement-orientation has greater relevance in regard to those sets of functions or areas of work where concrete and quantifiable targets can be set and achievement can be measured in terms of such targets or goals. Many of these activities often take the shape of identifiable projects, programmes and schemes. *The change in favour of the positive approach to the question of accountability that we are suggesting is especially important in regard to the whole range of such activities, and particularly the implementation of projects, programmes and schemes*

Specification of tasks

5.1 If the accountability of the officers is to be in terms of performance, then the tasks of the organisation will have first to be defined clearly. There can be no accountability if there is no perception of what is to be done and in what time-frame. In this context, we would like to stress the need for a preparation of a succinct document which will list out the tasks for each Department/Ministry and the time-frame within which the tasks have to be performed or goals achieved. No doubt, the Annual Plan, the Performance Budget and the Annual Report are being prepared and published by Ministries/Departments. Unfortunately, none of these documents can really be regarded as an action plan. It should be possible to formulate important jobs to be done in every Ministry into a definite programme of action for a year at a time. For each Ministry, a different format may be necessary. However, what is essential is that the Ministry/Department should ask itself well in advance what it proposes to do in the ensuing year and formulate as specific and precise an answer to this question as possible.

Preparation of a detailed action plan by each Ministry

5.2 For instance, in each year a typical economic ministry may have to do several of the following things :

- (a) resolving some short-term problems; formulating policy options on some longer-term problems, and perhaps taking decisions on some; on some still longer-term problems, initiating studies and the formulation of long-term strategies;
- (b) introducing legislation on certain matters and preparing a blue-print for prompt implementation once the legislation is passed;
- (c) reviewing certain policies and initiating the formulation of new ones;
- (d) initiating the formulation of certain programmes or projects; taking decisions on projects/programmes already

formulated and under consideration; ensuring the completion (or the scheduled progress) of projects or programmes under implementation;

(e) preparing sectoral programmes for the year, determining goals and targets in appropriate terms and ensuring their achievement; and so on.

This is only a tentative list and there can be a wide range of matters to be covered in such a programme of action in one year. *Each Department and Ministry should prepare a concise statement of the actions, steps, decisions, programmes, etc., to be initiated or completed during the ensuing year, preferably with dates attached to each.*

5.3 It is important that formulation of such a programme should not remain purely an internal exercise but should be known to the Government as a whole, and the Ministry concerned should stand committed to it. There should be a formal adoption of the ensuing financial year's programme and a communication of this to the Cabinet Secretary. *A periodical report of the performance should be sent to the Cabinet Secretary on the basis of which the Cabinet Secretary could report to the Prime Minister on the performance of each Ministry/Department.*

Assigning tasks to Divisions/Wings and to individual officials

5.4 Once each Ministry/Department has prepared a blue-print of this kind for the ensuing year, *it should be possible to assign tasks and responsibilities to different wings or divisions and to individual officers within those wings or divisions.* The Secretary of the Ministry or Department will, of course, have the overall responsibility but specific responsibility and tasks should be assigned to each Joint Secretary or perhaps each Director or Deputy Secretary. The progress of actual performance could then be monitored through monthly meetings of the officers presided over by the Secretary. Such monitoring should provide an important input for the periodical performance report to be sent by the Ministry/Department to the Cabinet Secretary.

VI

A clear scheme of delegation of authority within a Ministry:

6.1 A clear scheme of delegation of authority and responsibility at different levels within a Ministry is the prerequisite for ensuring accountability of individual functionaries. It is true that such a delegation is possible only in regard to those cases which are wholly within the purview of one ministry. There will be a number of matters which will be outside the delegated powers of a department or ministry, and decisions in regard to such matters would necessarily involve consultation with other ministries/departments. We shall presently come to the latter question. However, *in so far as the cases wholly within the purview of one ministry or department are concerned, there should be no difficulty at all in devising a clear scheme of delegation right down to the level of Deputy Secretary or even Under Secretary.*

6.2 Indeed, paragraph 20 of the Manual of Office Procedure stresses the need for the issue of departmental instructions specifying the levels at which different kinds of cases could be finally disposed of. In practice, however, this is rarely done. In many of the economic ministries there is no clear scheme of delegation of authority in matters of substantive decision-making entirely within their own delegated powers. In one department where such a scheme was introduced in 1976, it was later given up and the matters have again come to be left vaguely to the discretion of the Secretary and the Minister. The only detailed scheme of delegation that is operative is in terms of the financial sanctions, and it is often rendered inoperative because of the *ad hoc* instructions and circulars issued from time to time by the Ministry of Finance with a view to enforcing economy in expenditure.

Top-levels merely to lay down policies

6.3 While working out a clear scheme of delegation it should be borne in mind that *the top level functionaries at the political and the bureaucratic levels should merely lay down policies.* The other functionaries working within the ministry or department should be allowed and encouraged to take decisions in individual cases in the light of the policy guidelines and the scheme of delegation laid down

with the approval of the Minister in charge. Too many cases are currently being put up to ministers for decision and, before such cases reach the level of the minister, they have to pass through a whole hierarchy of levels extending from the Section Officer to the Secretary, which many times spans as many as half a dozen different functionaries. *Ministers and Secretaries should, in our opinion, assiduously question whether a case needs to be submitted to them at all for decision.* A determined questioning at their levels will result in a considerable reduction in the number of cases being submitted to the highest levels for decision. This will also enable Ministers and Secretaries to devote more time and attention to matters of greater importance involving policies and larger questions.

Role of Secretary

6.4 In this context, it is important to have *a correct appreciation of the role of the Secretary*. The Secretary should not himself become an operative. Joint Secretaries and Additional Secretaries should constitute the real operative levels. The Secretary's role should be that of co-ordinator, reviewer and chief adviser to the Minister in policy making. While the Secretary should have an overall responsibility for the functioning of the Department, Additional Secretaries/Joint Secretaries should be made fully responsible in the respective areas of work or project-implementation allotted to them.

Specific responsibility for project implementation

6.5 As we have observed earlier, a large part of the non-traditional and developmental activities of the Government takes the shape of specific projects. Often, long delays in the implementation of important projects are traceable to the earlier stages when the project proposal is being formulated and considered at various levels in the Departments/Ministries in consultation with the agencies initiating the project idea. It is possible to reduce, if not eliminate, such delays, if responsibilities are clearly identified for such work. *It is necessary to identify a specific officer or a group of officers as responsible for a particular project or a group of projects.*

Such an officer or group of officers will have to be adequately clothed with authority to take the necessary decisions or obtain necessary decisions from the higher authorities. Only then can achievement-orientation be attained and responsibilities identified in the area of project implementation. What we are suggesting here is not entirely a novel proposition. The efficient management of the Asiad and the NAM stands witness to the success of such an approach.

Atmosphere of understanding and rapport

6.6 While on the subject of delegation of authority, we should like to point out that even when the authority stands delegated formally, the official will feel confident to exercise power vested in them only if there is complete understanding and rapport between the political level and the bureaucratic hierarchy and also among the different layers of the bureaucracy. Such an understanding presupposes respect for the hierarchical system and the sanctity of the chain of command. Short-circuiting of the system ultimately leads to erosion of real authority and consequently, of accountability. In such a situation, it should cause no surprise if there develops a tendency to push up decisions to higher and higher levels. *For the successful working of any scheme of delegation therefore, it is essential to maintain an atmosphere of understanding and rapport among functionaries at different levels within the bureaucracy as well as between the bureaucracy and its political masters.*

Reforms of Performance Appraisal System

7.1 Given a clear specification of the task and the vesting of real authority, the next important prerequisite for ensuring individual accountability is a proper system for appraisal of performance. To start with, the role of the individual official within an organisation will have to be concretely and clearly related to the objective of the organisation. The appraisal should be of total performance and it should be on a continuing basis. It should have in-built elements for comparative gradation of different officials performing identical or similar tasks, so that the appraisal system can be geared to the system of rewards and punishments. The performance appraisal which prevails in the Government hardly fulfils any of these requirements. The appraisal is done once a year. It is qualitative and impressionistic. It is very often a general assessment of a person rather than that of the performance of a task by him. There is little evidence of objective criteria for the comparative gradation of achievement. *We believe that there is need for a drastic overhaul of the performance appraisal system.* We are of course assuming that the system will operate and will be seen to operate objectively.

Stability of tenure

7.2 Another important factor related to performance is the question of stability of tenure. It is not possible to hold anyone accountable for a given norm of achievement if he is not allowed sufficient time to develop the necessary grip on the job and translate his ability into performance. This is more so in regard to the more senior appointments where the task involved is complex and the results are necessarily a function of a minimum period of time. *It follows that officials, particularly at senior levels, should be given a reasonable length of time to show results and that this should be facilitated by some flexibility regarding tenures.*

Need for change in the attitude of watch-dog bodies

7.3 Lastly, we should like to stress the need to bring about a corresponding change in the attitude of the watch-dog bodies entrusted with enforcing accountability in public servants. What we have today in our system is essentially accountability for error and wrong

doing, and not for non-achievement or inefficiency. The exceptionally able, dynamic and impatient officer tends to get into trouble because he takes action and action carries the risk of error. All executive actions must necessarily involve, at some stage, the exercise of judgement or discretion. Each such judgement or decision is at present fraught with the danger of ex post facto questioning by Audit or by the Vigilance machinery or by investigating agencies such as the CBI. *The hypertrophy of accountability of the wrong kind is not calculated to encourage speed, initiative or result-orientation. An appropriate reorientation of the agencies of the Government entrusted with the task of enforcing rectitude and accountability is essential for promoting the answerability of individual officials in the positive sense and greater result-orientation in the bureaucratic machinery.*

7.4 A major re-orientation of the accountability concepts and procedures within the Government may be difficult without a measure of understanding and agreement on the part of Parliament and its Committees. *The best means of securing Parliament's cooperation in this matter might be for Government to prepare a White Paper on the more positive understanding of accountability that we have outlined above, and place it before the Parliament.* We have no doubt that such a White Paper would be well received by Parliament.

VIII

Matters of inter-departmental or inter-ministerial concern

8.1 Even with the adoption of a detailed and meaningful annual plan of action by the individual ministries/departments and a clear scheme of delegation of authority and responsibility, as suggested above, there will still remain a large area where decision making will involve more than one ministry/department. It is necessary to streamline the process of decision-making in this area so as to ensure a greater degree of accountability and induce a greater sense of result-orientation at the level of the organisation as well as the individuals working within the organisation.

Imbalance between authority and accountability

8.2 The system that obtains today is somewhat restrictive and vague. At present, no decision can be taken by any ministry except with the concurrence of other ministries who are concerned with it, in one way or the other. The ministry basically responsible for a given task, say Industrial Development, does not really have the authority commensurate with the task given to it. For example, if there is an M RTP angle to a proposal, virtually the Department of Company Affairs has the final word. If environmental matters are involved the newly established Department of Environment comes into the picture, and there is a danger that this may become one more vetoing agency in the future. Inter-departmental or inter-ministerial committees do exist and try to take care of issues of collective concern in the best manner possible. However, a measure of imbalance between authority and accountability does persist*.

8.3 Rule 4(1) of the Rules of Transaction of Business lays down that when the subject of a case concerns more than one department, no order should issue until all such departments have concurred or failing such concurrence, a decision has been taken by or under the authority of the Cabinet. The Explanation under the rule makes it abundantly clear that every case in which a decision, if taken in one department, is likely to affect the transaction of business allotted to another department, shall be deemed to be a case concerning more

*The points made in this and ensuing paragraphs have also been made from a different point of view in our *Report No. 28 on Economy in Public Expenditure*.

than one department. This formulation is perhaps too wide in its scope.

8.4 Even the Committees of the Cabinet constituted under Rule 6 of the Rules of Transaction of Business become virtually powerless when one or more of the Ministries concerned are not prepared to concur in the proposal put forward by the ministry substantively responsible for the task involved in the proposal. The cases that the Cabinet Committee must submit to the Cabinet for decision include those in which there is difference of opinion between two or more Ministries.

Need to recognise lead role of the administrative ministries in their respective areas

8.5 As a first step towards streamlining the processes of decision-making in this area, we feel that *it is necessary to recognise the lead role of the administrative Ministries in their areas*. While they could consult the other Ministries concerned on various aspects, they should be in a position to take the final decision even overruling the other ministries, if necessary. In regard to the finance function, powers have been delegated to the administrative Ministries and they can overrule the Financial Advisers within the delegated area. It is necessary that a similar arrangement should be made in respect of other types of inter-Ministerial consultations. This would ensure that the Ministry responsible for a given task also has the necessary power to achieve it. With such an arrangement, it will also not be possible for any Ministry substantively concerned with a given task to pass on the blame for non-achievement to other departments or ministries for withholding their concurrence.

Role of technical and specialised agencies

8.6 Over the years the new concerns of the Government such as pollution and environmental aspects, afforestation, non-conventional sources of energy, etc., have added to the number of agencies whose clearance must be obtained before any proposal or project is put through. *In our opinion, such specialised departments and agencies should merely lay down broad guidelines for implementation by other ministries and not get themselves involved in case-by-case clearance*. Indeed, departments and agencies such as Department of Environment, Department of Science and Technology, etc., should remain technical and specialised agencies which provide advice and guidelines but whose concurrence in every case should not be insisted upon. Such a functional reorganisation will automatically remove many of the procedural constraints and consequent delays in implementation of

projects, without in any way undermining the basic objectives meant to be achieved through such technical and specialised agencies.

The matrix approach

8.7 In cases in which more than one ministry/department are unavoidably involved, we would suggest that the matrix approach be followed for speedy and effective decision-making. Indeed, this is not an entirely new idea. In the field, it has been followed all along. The District Collector serves as the focal point for decision-making at the district level in all matters of inter-departmental concern and consultations. Although there are various departmental officers at the district level, the State Governments have recognised the lead role of the District Collector and this has led to greater speed and result-orientation. This model should be kept in view in working the instrument of inter-departmental or inter-ministerial committees. The Licensing Committee in the earlier years did function more or less in a similar manner. The Industries Secretary who was responsible for the implementation of industrial projects took the lead role in the functioning of this Committee and this made for speedy decision-making. Later with the emergence of independent departments in charge of different segments of industry, on the one hand, and the coming into force of the MRTA Act, on the other, the lead role of the Ministry of Industry and the Licensing Committee got diluted. The institution of LC-cum-MRTA Committee in 1973 can be seen as an attempt to follow the matrix approach and to regain the lead role for the Ministry of Industry. However, in practice, the objective does not seem to have been fully achieved.

8.8 For the matrix approach to be successful, it is essential that while the inter-departmental committees should function collectively, individual members should not be allowed to reserve the positions of their respective ministries/agencies. Also, such committees should be chaired by the Secretary whose department is recognised as having the lead role in the particular function or area. The Special Committee of Secretaries for the Fertilizer Industry which is chaired by Secretary (Fertilizer and Chemicals) is an instance of the successful functioning of the matrix approach. What is necessary is to extend the application of this approach by greater recourse to the device of inter-departmental empowered committees.

Need to reorganise the committees

8.9 While on the subject of functioning of the inter-departmental committees, we may point out that there are far too many committees at the level of Secretaries. In the area of Industrial Approvals alone,

there are as many as nine Secretary-level committees, many of them meeting once a week or once a fortnight. There are many other statutory and non-statutory committees and boards dealing with other aspects of economic administration in which the presence of the Secretary concerned is essential. Physically it may not be possible for a Secretary to attend the meetings of so many committees. *We suggest, therefore, that Government may consider whether at least some of these committees could be formed at a lower level, say at that of Joint Secretaries.* We must, however, add that whatever the level of the representation, the committees should be decision-making bodies and the representatives of the ministries/departments should not be allowed to reserve the positions of their respective agencies. It is only then that the lower level committees could effectively take away at least a part of the burden from the Secretary-level committees and contribute to speed in decision-making.

Cases of inter-departmental and inter-ministerial differences Reference to P. M.

8.10 As we have seen earlier, under the system operating at the Centre, cases where two or more ministers fail to concur can be resolved only at the level of the Cabinet. In many State Governments, such differences are resolved more expeditiously. The Chief Secretary and the Chief Minister are vested with over-riding powers to resolve inter-departmental and inter-ministerial differences. The Chief Secretary is clearly the focal point and the final arbiter at the bureaucratic level. Differences between two or more ministers are required to be referred to the Chief Minister whose decision is taken to be final. We feel that a similar arrangement needs to be evolved at the Centre, if necessary, by amending the relevant provisions of the Rules of Transaction of Business. *The Cabinet Secretary should be in a position to intervene in differences between two or more Secretaries and take a final decision or refer the matter for final decision to the Prime Minister. Except for the substantive category of cases where the decision has got to be taken at the Cabinet level, all other cases of differences between two or more ministers should be left to the Prime Minister for decision.* In such cases, it should be the Prime Minister's discretion whether the matter should be referred to or brought to the notice of the Cabinet.

IX

Summary of conclusions and recommendations

9. Summing up, our conclusions and recommendations are as follows :—

9.1 Accountability, somewhat narrowly conceived, implies mainly the need to conform to a set of norms and methods. In a slightly wider sense, but still limited in application to the traditional tasks of Government, it implies the prompt disposal of business. In a still wider view of the matter and in the context of the non-traditional, developmental functions of Government, it goes beyond mere compliance with rules or speed in disposal, and means responsibility for decisions and answerability for the achievement of the assigned task.

(Paragraphs 2.1 to 2.2)

9.2 In the past, for various reasons, the emphasis has been on accountability in the narrow sense.

(Paragraphs 3.1 to 3.3)

9.3 It is necessary to move away from the negative and formal approach of the past and to adopt a more positive approach to accountability. This would require both systemic and attitudinal changes. A high-level watch on the disposal of business in the sphere of the traditional activities of Government will ensure speed in decision-making and make for the greater accountability of officials.

(Paragraphs 4.1 & 4.2)

9.4 The achievement-orientation implicit in the positive meaning of accountability is more relevant in regard to the whole range of non-traditional and developmental functions of the Government and particularly, the implementation of projects, programmes and schemes.

(Paragraph 4.3)

9.5 There can be no accountability if there is no perception of what is to be done and in what time-frame. For every Department/Ministry, it is necessary to prepare a concise statement of actions, steps, decisions, programmes, etc., to be initiated or completed during the ensuing year, preferably with dates attached to each. The

formulation of such a programme should not remain purely an internal exercise but it should be known to the Government as a whole and the Departments/Ministries concerned should stand committed to it. Their performance with reference to such an action plan should be monitored.

(Paragraphs 5.1 to 5.3)

9.6 Once each Ministry/Department has prepared a blue-print of this kind for the ensuing year, it should be possible to assign tasks and responsibilities to different wings and divisions and to individual officers working within these wings or divisions.

(Paragraphs 5.4 & 5.5)

9.7 A clear scheme of delegation of authority and responsibility at different levels within the Ministry should be evolved for ensuring the accountability of individual functionaries. Such delegation should extend right down to the level of Deputy Secretary and Under Secretary. The top level functionaries should merely lay down policies; the other functionaries should be allowed and encouraged to take decisions in individual cases in the light of the policy guidelines and the scheme of delegation. Ministers and Secretaries should assiduously question whether a case needs to be submitted to them at all for decision. This will enable them to devote more time and attention to matters of policies and larger questions. The Secretary should not himself become an operative; his role should be that of coordinator, reviewer and chief adviser to the Minister in policy-making.

(Paragraphs 6.1 to 6.4)

9.8 Since a large part of the non-traditional and developmental activities of the Government takes the shape of specific projects, it is essential to identify a specific officer or a group of officers as responsible for a particular project or a group of projects, and give that officer or group adequate authority to take decisions or obtain decisions from higher authorities.

(Paragraph 6.5)

9.9 For successful working of any scheme of delegation, it is essential to maintain an atmosphere of complete understanding and rapport between the bureaucracy and its political masters, and also among the different layers of the bureaucracy.

(Paragraph 6.6)

9.10 A proper system for performance appraisal is essential for ensuring individual accountability. The performance appraisal which prevails in the Government is far from satisfactory and needs radical overhaul.

(Paragraph 7.1)

9.11 Officers, particularly at senior levels, should be given a reasonable length of time to show results, and this should be facilitated by some flexibility regarding tenures.

(Paragraph 7.2)

9.12 The hypertrophy of accountability of the wrong kind is not calculated to encourage speed, initiative or result-orientation. An appropriate re-orientation of the agencies of Government entrusted with the task of enforcing rectitude and accountability is essential for promoting the answerability of individual officials in the positive sense and a greater result re-orientation. Parliament's understanding of and support in such a re-orientation should be secured by placing a White Paper on the subject before it.

(Paragraphs 7.3 & 7.4)

9.13 There is need to streamline the process of decision-making in regard to matters of inter-departmental or inter-ministerial concern. For this purpose, it is necessary to recognise the lead role of the administrative Ministries in their respective areas and to empower them to take the final decision in specified areas, even over-ruling the other ministries, if necessary.

(Paragraphs 8.1 to 8.5)

9.14 Specialised departments and agencies dealing with new concerns of the Government such as pollution, environment, etc., should merely lay down broad guidelines for implementation by other Ministries and not themselves get involved in case-by-case clearance.

(Paragraph 8.6)

9.15 In cases where more than one Ministry/Department are unavoidably involved, the matrix approach should be followed for speedy and effective decision-making. For the matrix approach to be successful, it is essential that while the inter-departmental committees should function collectively, individual members should not be allowed to reserve the position of the respective ministries/agencies. Also such committees should be chaired by the Secretary whose department is recognised as having the lead role in the particular function or area.

(Paragraphs 8.7 & 8.8)

9.16 Since there are too many committees at the level of Secretaries, it will be useful to consider whether at least some of these committees could be formed at a lower level, say at that of Joint Secretaries, subject to the participants being fully authorised to represent and take decisions on behalf of their Departments.

(Paragraph 8.9)

9.17 In dealing with the cases of inter-departmental and inter-ministerial differences, a more expeditious procedure should be evolved, keeping in view the procedures prevalent in many State Governments. The Cabinet Secretary should be in a position to intervene in differences between two or more Secretaries and take a final decision or refer the matter for decision to the Prime Minister, it being left to the Prime Minister to decide whether the matter should be referred to or brought to the notice of the Cabinet.

(Paragraph 8.10)

